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The Honest Shoe Maker

BY

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PRICE 15 CENTS.

ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE
Franklin, Ohio.

THE HONEST SHOEMAKER

A Domestic Play for Little Folks
in Four Scenes.

Adapted from Grim's Fairy Tale, "The Shoemaker
and the Elves."

By REA WOODMAN, M. A..

Author of "Preserving a Smith," "The Rescue of Prince
Hal," "The Clever Doctor," and "Galliger."

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Eldridge Entertainment House,
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Dedicated to Frederick Evans Delzell, a little Texas boy, whose unalloyed confidence in my ability to "tell a 'tory," is very precious to me.



THE CHARACTERS OF THE DRAMA.

John Dobson, the Honest Shoemaker,

Mary Dobson, His Wife.

First Creditor.

Second Creditor.

First Customer.

Second Customer.

Nix and Trix, the Kindly Elves.

Scene 1. The Shoemaker's Shop One Monday
Afternoon.

Scene II. The Shoemaker's Shop the next Morn-
ing.

Scene III. The Shoemaker's Shop One Week
Later.

Scene IV. The Shoemaker's Shop Christmas Eve.

THE HONEST SHOEMAKER.

SCENE I.

The Shoemaker's Shop—One Monday Afternoon.

(The Shoemaker's Shop. A plain room, containing, besides a long heavy curtain against wall, only a shoemaker's bench and a table. John Dobson, the Shoemaker, is discovered sitting on the bench in an attitude of extreme despondency.)

John. (smoothing out his leather apron). I do not understand how it is that I do not get on. I work hard, yet here I am, a perfectly poor man. There is hardly anything in the house to eat, and I have only leather enough for one pair of shoes. (sighs). I do not understand why I do not get on. (Sighingly he takes up a large piece of leather.) This is all the leather I have in the world. It will make one pair of shoes. Then I do not know what we will do. (There is a loud knock at the door.) I hope that is not a customer, for I have nothing to sell. (calls). Come in!

(Enter the First Creditor, in a stiff hat, with a cane.)

John. (rising). Good evening, sir.

First C. Good evening. I suppose you remember me?

John. (sighing). I do.

First C. (taking a paper from his pocket). Well, what are you going to do about this little bill?

John. I am going to pay it as soon as I can.

First C. (frowning). You said that yesterday.

John. (sighing). I did. And I say it again today.

First C. Come now. This won't do, you know. Either you are going to pay it, or you are not.

John. You said that yesterday.

First C. Well, I say it again today. (There is a melancholy pause.) Well, what are you going to do? Speak up.

John. (*holding up the leather*). You see this? It is all the leather I have. I shall make a pair of shoes in the morning. If I sell them, I may be able to pay you something. Let me see; how much is your bill?

First C. (*twirling his stylish cane*). You know perfectly well how much it is.

John. (*sitting down on the bench*). No, I don't. I get 'em mixed.

First C. (*referring to the bill*). This is for milk delivered at your door for the past five weeks. It is for one dollar and forty cents.

John. Oh yes, I remember now. Well, I can't pay it.

First C. I will call tomorrow, sir, and if you do not pay it, I will have you arrested. Good day, sir. (*He goes, stiffly.*)

John. (*alone*). Little did I think, a year ago, that I would not be able to pay the milk bill. But I will not be discouraged. Things will take a turn. (*There comes a knock on the door, which he does not hear.*) I will not be discouraged. No man should lose courage while he is able to work.

(*Enter the Second Creditor, as if very angry.*)

Sec. Cred. (*in a surly tone*). Good afternoon. I rapped, but you did not hear me. Are you going to pay that little bill today?

John. (*taking up an awl*). Which bill is it?

Sec. Cred. (*crossly*). You know which bill it is.

John. No, I don't. I get 'em mixed.

Sec. Cred. (*more crossly*). Here, I have no time to lose. You know which bill it is.

John. No, I don't. All you fellows look alike.

Sec. Cred. (*in a rage*). We all look alike—we all look alike, do we? I'll show you how we all look alike. You can't bully me, sir. I tell you that right now. (*He slams the bill on the table.*) I'll have the law on you, that's what I'll have. Here is my bill. Do you see it, sir?

John. (*measuring leather*). Yes, I see it.

Sec. Cred. All right, sir. You say you do see it, sir. I will call tomorrow, and if you don't pay it, we'll make you pay it. Do you understand? (*pounds on the table*). We'll make you pay it. Them as can't pay their debts, the Law sends 'em to jail. That's the Law, that is, and I'll have the Law on you! That's all I have to say, sir! (*He flings out.*)

John. (*rising, and looking at the bill*). I do not understand why it is that I do not get on.

(*Enter Mary Dobson, in an old dress, patched and clean, with a little shawl about her shoulders.*)

Mary. What is that, John,—a bill?

John. (*hiding the bill*). No, just a—a little piece of poetry I was learning.

Mary. I don't see how you find any time for poetry. Well, put it away and come to supper.

John. See what a fine piece of leather this is!

Mary. (*shaking her head*). I know, John, I know. That is the last piece of leather you have. You can not deceive me.

John. (*putting it down gently*). It is. We are very poor.

Mary. (*placing her hand on his arm*). Well, John, you must not be discouraged. It will come out all right if you do not lose hope.

John. (*looking steadily down*). Tomorrow I will make the very best pair of shoes that I know how. Things will take a turn.

Mary. That is the way to feel. Come to supper now. We have only bread and tea. The potatoes are all gone.

John. (*looking steadily down*). There are a good many people who have n't any bread to-night. (*He takes off his leather apron, and lays it gently on the bench.*)

Mary. That is true, John. We should be very thankful. (*She lifts the candle.*)

John. Things will take a turn. (*They go out, she carrying the candle.*)

CURTAIN.

SCENE II.

The Shoemaker's Shop—The Next Morning.

(*The Shop, as before. On the table, prominently placed, a pair of bran-new shoes.*)

(*Enter John Dobson, in his leather apron.*)

John. (*sitting down on his bench*). I will make the very best pair of shoes that I can—the very best. It is a beautiful morning, and we have had a good breakfast. I can not feel discouraged in such a beautiful world. Things will take a turn. (*He examines some of his tools.*) Now I'll make the shoes that are to bring us good fortune. Why, where is my leather? (*He hunts everywhere.*) I laid it on the bench the last thing I did last night, all cut out, so I could get to work right away. (*He searches again.*) It is gone. And it was all I had! What will become of us? (*He buries his face in his hands, thinks a minute, then slowly looks up.*) I will not tell my wife; she was so happy this morning. She said, "John, this is going to be a beautiful day for us. I feel it." I can not tell her this. (*Looking around vaguely, he sees the new shoes.*) Why, what are these? I did not make these. (*He examines them.*) Who put them here? How strange. (*He rubs his eyes.*) I hope I am not going crazy. These are bran-new. (*calls*). Mary! Mary! Come here!

(*Enter Mary Dobson, wearing a dust cap and carrying a mop.*)

Mary, look here! I just found these.

Mary. Found them! Are you crazy?

John. Somebody put them here in place of my leather. They are here, and it is gone.

Mary. (*examining the shoes*). How do you know? Why, John, look! They are made of your leather! Look!

John. How can that be?

Mary. But they are, anyway. Look!

John. So they are. (*He sits down from sheer weakness.*) Mary, you are a smart woman. My own leather! Now what do you know about that?

Mary. (*crying*). Oh John, somebody made them for you in the night!

John. But what shall I do with them?

Mary. Sell them; they are yours. Somebody means good to us because you were patient and hopeful. Don't you see? I must scrub the kitchen floor; there will be many customers now. Oh, I am so happy, dear John! (*She goes, drying her eyes.*)

John. (*staring at the shoes*). How could anybody make them in the night? It could not be. And if I sell them, I may be arrested for stealing. I do not know what to do. I am in a worse case than I was.

(*Enter the First Customer.*)

First C. (*taking off his stylish hat*). Good morning.

John. (*rising*). Good morning.

First C. Your wife told me to come right in. I want to buy a pair of shoes, and your shop has been recommended to me. I am willing to pay a good price for them. I do not wear store shoes; they hurt my feet. Have you any good shoes, number ten?

John. I have a fine pair of shoes here that I have just finished. (*He holds up the shoes, turning them around admiringly.*) They are first-class in every particular.

First C. (*taking them*). Are they soft leather? I must have soft leather. My feet are very tender.

John. These shoes would not hurt anybody's feet. The Queen of England wears shoes made out of this leather.

First C. (*using a red silk handkerchief with much*

elegance). Indeed! And she is supposed to be very particular.

John. Oh, she is—a most particular old lady. Will you try them on?

First C. No, I never try on my shoes in public. I will pay for them, and take them with me, on the understanding that you will take them back if they hurt my feet.

John. Certainly, sir, certainly.

First C. (*taking out a fat pocketbook*). How much are they?

John. Ten dollars.

First C. (*counting out the bills*). Here is the money. (*John wraps up the shoes*.) I will bring them back to you if they do not suit.

John. You are a stranger in town, sir?

First C. (*putting away the fat pocketbook*). I am, sir. I arrived from Europe this morning.

John. Europe is a very pleasant place to live, they say.

First C. It is, sir. Good day, sir.

John. (*bowing him out*). Good day, sir. Thank you. Call again, sir. (*The First Customer goes*.) Ten dollars! Now I can pay all my debts. (*takes off his apron*). I will buy some more leather, right away, and get to work. Things have taken a turn.

(*Enter the Second Customer, "a stylish lady," pushing a doll buggy.*)

John. (*with marked urbanity*). Good morning, Madam. Let me assist you. (*He helps her get the buggy to rights*.) What may I do for you?

Lady C. I want to buy some shoes for my little girl.

John. I am sorry, Madam, but I am just out of children shoes,—just this morning. Can you call again?

Lady C. (*much occupied with her face veil, which catches her eyelashes*). No, I am going to New York tomorrow to attend a ball.

John. (*visibly impressed*). Ah, that is unfortunate. Can you not leave your order, Madam?—I could send them to you.

Lady C. (*spreading her train*). I guess I could do that, only she needs the shoes to go to the ball.

John. (*putting on a pair of spectacles, and opening a big ledger*). Can you not call this afternoon? I can have them here by 2 o'clock.

Lady C. That will do, I think. Please write down one pair of red slippers, one pair of blue slippers, and two pairs of strapped shoes.

John. (*writing*). What color, Madam?

Lady C. I told you the color. Blue and red.

John. (*writing*). Excuse me, Madam, what color are the strapped shoes to be?

Lady C. (*arranging her veil*). Black. For street wear.

John. (*chewing his pen holder*). What number?

Lady C. (*blinking painfully under the taut veil*). Baby size, of course.

John. But there are several baby sizes, Madam.

Lady C. Oh. Well, put down number three. That is all today.

John. (*shutting the ledger, and taking off the spectacles*). That is a fine child you have there, Madam.

Lady C. (*sighing*). Yes, I have six children. (*She begins to turn the buggy—no easy task for a lady with a train and a veil!*)

John. (*assisting*). That is a large family, Madam.

Lady C. And all my children are so delicate! My oldest boy has the electric fits.

John. Dear me, that is very distressing!

Lady C. (*adjusting her hat and veil and train*). Good morning.

John. (*bowing and bowing*). Good morning, Madam. (*The Lady Customer goes, with dignity and difficulty.*)

She does n't know what size shoe her baby wears! And the mother of six children! Women are very silly. It's lucky I have the money. I could not afford to lose so elegant a customer. (*He takes his top coat and hat and colored scarf from a wall-peg and puts them on.*) I will buy some potatoes, and surprise Mary. (*Winds the long scarf around and around his neck.*) Things have taken a turn. (*He goes out, whistling.*)

CURTAIN.

SCENE III.

The Shoemaker's Shop—One Week Later.

(*The Shoemaker's Shop. John Dobson, in his apron, is discovered seated at the table, on which a candle burns. He is "figuring up accounts" laborously and earnestly.*)

John. (*figuring*). Two and seven is nine, and five is—is fourteen. Five and eight is (*counts on his fingers*) thirteen, and one to carry is fourteen. That makes it easy, to have it come out fourteen. Fourteen from fourteen is nothing. Four from nine is five—five dollars. I have made five dollars and fourteen cents above expenses in one week, and here it is. (*He jingles the coin in a little canvas moneybag on the table.*) Five dollars and fourteen cents. That is a large sum. (*He contemplates the figures.*) I did not know there was so much arithmetic in the shoe business. There never was before. (*There is a timid knock on the door.*) That can't be a customer.—Come in!

(*Enter the Second Creditor, carrying a lighted lantern.*)

Creditor. Good evening.

John. (*staring at him*). Oh, it's you!

Cred. (*embarrassed*). I know it's late, but—

John. Well, I should say it is. It's nearly midnight.

Cred. I know it, but I'm in trouble, and I—I—

John. (*coldly*). What's the matter of you?

Cred. (*twirling his hat in his hand*). I know it looks queer for me to come here so late—

John. (*sourily*). It does. What do you want?

Cred. I—you see, I—(*Then he blurts it out.*) I will be arrested tomorrow morning and put in jail if I do not pay my meat bill.

John. So you'll be arrested! At what time?

Cred. At 9 o'clock.

John. Well, why don't you pay it?

Cred. I have n't got any money. And if they put me in jail that will be worse. How can a man earn money when he is in jail?

John. Sit down. (*The Creditor sits down on the bench, a broken man.*) You want to borrow the money from me? Is that it? (*The Creditor nods, his head bent.*) You want to borrow money from me. (*He stares hard at the miserable Creditor.*) A week ago you said you would arrest me,—do you remember?

Cred. I do.

John. You said you'd have the Law on me.

Cred. I did, and I would have. That was good business. You paid the money, and I did not have you arrested. That was good business, too. You are an honest man. I need a friend, and I—I thought I'd make free to ask you—

John. (*jumping up*). Shake hands. (*They shake hands, solemnly.*) How much is that bill?

Cred. Four dollars and twenty-five cents.

John. (*taking up the canvas bag*). I will give it to you right now—

Cred. No, no, I will come again in the morning. I can wait. I—I'd rather wait. I will go home and tell my wife that I will not have to go to jail. She is sick in bed. (*He breaks down.*)

John. (*placing his hand on his shoulder*). That's all right. That's all right.

Cred. I—(*turns to go*). Good night.

John. Good night. Call around in the morning. (*The Creditor goes. John stands still a minute, shaking his head sadly. Then, sighing, he puts the moneybag in his pocket, and takes up a number of pieces of leather from the bench. By the time he has matched and fitted these, he is whistling cheerfully a mournful air.*) There, I have cut out four pairs of shoes, just for an experiment. Every night for a week I've left leather cut out, ready to make up, and in the morning the shoes have been made up. It is very strange. To night my wife and I are going to watch and see who does the work. She thinks it's fairies. I don't. I don't believe in fairies, and besides, who ever heard of fairies that could make shoes? Anyway, I am making money very fast.

(*Enter Mary, wrapped in a cosy shawl.*)

Mary. Who was that came in?

John. A man to see me on business.

Mary. It is nearly midnight. You know fairies never appear until midnight.

John. (*arranging leather cuttings on the bench*). I do not expect to see any fairies.

Mary. Well, we shall see. There is no use arguing about it. Where shall we hide?

John. Let us get behind that curtain. Did you leave the door unlocked? (*He hides behind the curtain, so that he can peek out at one side.*)

Mary. Yes, and I left a light in the kitchen. (*She hides behind the curtain, so that she can peek out at the other side.*)

John. I should not think that fairies would need a light.

(*A clock outside strikes twelve. Upon the last stroke, the Elves, Nix and Trix, caper in. They wear only short, ragged, skimpt, one-piece slips, and their hair tumbles*

down their shoulders. They take up the leather pieces, and, holding them high, dance around the table three times. Then, sitting down on the bench, their backs to the audience, they hammer and tack and rap away at a great rate, tossing their tousled heads all the while. Presently, they spring up, each with two pairs of bran-new shoes, and put them neatly on the table, with manifest pride. Then, after dancing around the table three times, they scamper out.)

Mary. (*coming out*). I told you so!

John. (*coming out*). You said fairies. They are Elves.

Mary. It's the same thing. I told you so!

John. It is n't the same thing at all. But I don't care; they have brought us fame and fortune.

Mary. (*wiping her eyes*). The dear little Elves! I wish we might do something for them.

John. (*examining the shoes*). So do I. How good they are!

Mary. I wish we could do something to show that we are grateful. I tell you what. I'll make each of them a little coat and waistcoat and cap. Did you notice how thin their dresses were? Poor little things, they must get very cold.

John. Yes, and they were barefoot. I'll make shoes for them, and buy some stockings.

Mary. (*looking absently at the candle*). I suppose their mother is dead.

John. (*examining the shoes*). They understand the shoe business, all right.

Mary. And let's leave the things here for them Christmas Eve. Then they'll know that we are truly thankful.

John. That is a good idea, Mary.

Mary. (*lifting the candle*). Ugh, it is very cold. I am glad I put on this shawl. (*She goes toward the door.*)

John. (*looking down at the shoes, on the table*). Things have sure taken a turn. I never believed in fairies

before. Why, I can't make better shoes myself.

Mary. (*shivering*). Come on. Do not stand there talking all night.

CURTAIN.

SCENE IV.

The Shoemaker's Shop—Christmas Eve.

(*The Shoemaker's Shop. John Dobson is discovered standing by the table, without his apron, and with a flower in his button-hole. He holds two pairs of shoes and stockings, and a quantity of holly. Two candles burn on the table.*)

John. (*arranging the gifts and holly on the bench*). This is the nicest Christmas we have ever had. I am not worried about money any more, for all my debts are paid. We have flour and potatoes enough for the winter, and I have got my wife a silk dress for Christmas—but she does not know it yet. And the kind little Elves did it all!

(*Enter Mary, in a pretty dress, with a red flower in her hair. She carries a number of little garments, and a box tied with red ribbon.*)

Mary. Well, what do you think, John? There just came a poor woman to the door. She said she has three children, and her husband is out of work.

John. (*arranging holly sprays on the bench*). Did you give her some money?

Mary. (*putting her gifts on the table*). I gave her a dollar, John. Tomorrow I am going to see her. She seemed like such a nice woman.

John. You can take the children a Christmas gift, if you want to. We can afford it. (*proudly*). I bought some holly to surprise you.

Mary. That is very nice. And I bought some candy for the Elves. (*She arranges the garments in two piles, overstrewn with holly.*) Oh, is not this the most beau-

tiful Christmas! We are able to buy whatever we like, and as much as we like—I never had such a Christmas in my life! Oh John, do you think we are thankful enough?

John. Yes, I think we are, but of course we can not show it all at once.

Mary. (*standing off to survey the table*). No, that is true, John. We have the rest of our lives to show it in. Don't the things look pretty?

John. (*looking at the table*). Those are good warm coats, Mary. (*There is a thoughtful pause.*) I did n't know that Christmas was such a —such a—a *blessed* sort of time.

Mary. It never was before—not in this house. Maybe it's because we're so thankful. (*Sleigh bells are heard in the distance.*) Listen! Sleigh bells! (*The merry ringing diminishes and softly dies away.*) Oh John, is it not beautiful? I am so happy I almost want to die!

John. (*brusquely, turning away*). Hurry up! I'm afraid they'll come!

Mary. (*twistfully*). I wonder if they know about Santa Claus?

John. (*starting out*). Well, if they don't, they soon will. Come on. (*With a lingering look at the presents, they go out.*)

(*The clock strikes twelve. On the last stroke, Nix and Trix come scampering in. Silently, they look for their usual work, and discover the presents on the table and bench. They examine and compare them, with many gestures of surprise and delight, and, finally deciding that the gifts are for them, they dance around the table three times, hugging their presents. Then, in gleeful pantomime, they don the garments, shoes and all, helping each other, and often stopping to eat candy and frisk about. Then, their hands full of holly sprays, their pockets bulging with candy, they circle around the table three times and, after jerky little bows, scamper out, throwing kisses recklessly.*)

CURTAIN.

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